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Utah's next door neighbour (Colorado) may boast more skier visits per year, but those in the know will tell you that Utah's powder is the lightest on earth. There's over 500 inches (more than 40 feet / 12 meters) of snow at most Utah ski resorts each winter and that's about 200 inches more than most Colorado resorts.



While many Utah resorts have made significant upgrades over the last ten years, the most noticeable change for many visitors will be the relaxation of Utah's notoriously strict liquor laws. Once known as a difficult place to get a drink, recent changes to Utah's formerly peculiar liquor laws dispensed with some of the previously required formalities, such as paying a membership fee to drink at a bar. In fact, Utah's liquor laws are now in line with in most other states. Visitors unfamiliar with Utah's previous alcohol scheme would now not notice any difference between Utah and any other U.S. state.

While Utah has a lot going for it, one of the best things about Utah is how easy it is to get there. Utah resorts are amongst the most accessible in the USA. Snowbird, Alta, Solitude and Brighton (all skiable on the remarkably cheap Ski Salt Lake Superpass) are within 30 minutes of Salt Lake City International Airport, while Park City, Deer Valley and The Canyons are all less than an hour from the tarmac.

Most Utah resorts allow you to ski free the day you land when you produce your airline ticket. Flying and skiing on the same day is not only possible, it's commonplace! Additionally, because the airport is deep in the valley where temperatures are mild even in the mid-winter months, the airport is only rarely closed due to snow.

**Salt Lake City Resorts**

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**Alta**

One word defines **Alta** – POWDER. The resort is blessed with well over 500 inches of snow each winter and the snow is so dry the resort even publishes the water content of every snowfall (often under 5%). Upgrade your ski lift ticket to an Alta Snowbird ticket and you'll be able to *ski* between the two interconnected resorts – a popular option for those staying at Snowbird's more luxurious accommodations. That's right ski and only ski because Alta is one of only a handful of US resorts which prohibits snowboarding. Alta is strictly a skier's paradise and what a paradise it is. Don't let the resort's modest vertical (only 2000 feet) deter you. Alta has some seriously steep terrain. Just be prepared to endure some longish catwalks to get there. The relatively low number of lifts means that to reach the good stuff, you'll be traversing more than usual – often on narrow tracks. It's worth it though – trust us. As a final word of warning, Alta grooms very little, so if you're uncomfortable skiing powder and crud, Alta is not for you. If you're looking to stay at Alta, the resort offers a reasonable amount of slopeside lodging and much of it is affordably priced. However, the hotels in Alta are rather rustic and spartan. If you're going to Alta, it's for the powder. There is no base village and the nightlife is practically nonexistent. So if you like powder, visit. You'll understand. Oh and leave the narrow skis at home – rent fat powder skis. It's worth it.

**Snowbird**

Considered by many to be the best all-around ski resort in the United States, **Snowbird** blends 500 inches of fluffy powder a year with exceptional terrain and first rate slopeside lodging – all within 30 minutes of a major international airport. Snowbird does not look like your traditional ski resort -no charming Tyrolean pedestrian village here. In fact, those making their maiden visit to Snowbird might be put off at first by the exterior appearance of the buildings, all of which appear to be designed by an architect whose sole prior experience must have been limited to concrete parking garages. But once you arrive, you'll learn there is a very good reason for Snowbird's austere bombshelter-esque style – SNOW. Snowbird receives so much snow each winter and the surrounding hills are so steep that the resort's buildings are reinforced to survive direct avalanche strikes. If you stay any of the slopeside hotels, the front desk will need to keep your keys so they can remove your vehicle from the parking lot to perform avalanche work every morning. At some resorts, after hitting the snooze button a few times, the sweet sound of avalanche-triggering explosions is audible in the distance - not at Snowbird. At Snowbird, you won't need that alarm clock, nor have a need to hit the snooze button. On most mornings, when 7 am rolls around, you might well think you'd woken up on the Western Front, that din meaning just one thing: a powder day. Your room will shake and your windows rattle with the sound of TNT exploding startlingly close-by. If you're like us, you'll smile at being so "rudely" awakened because there's simply no better way to wake up...

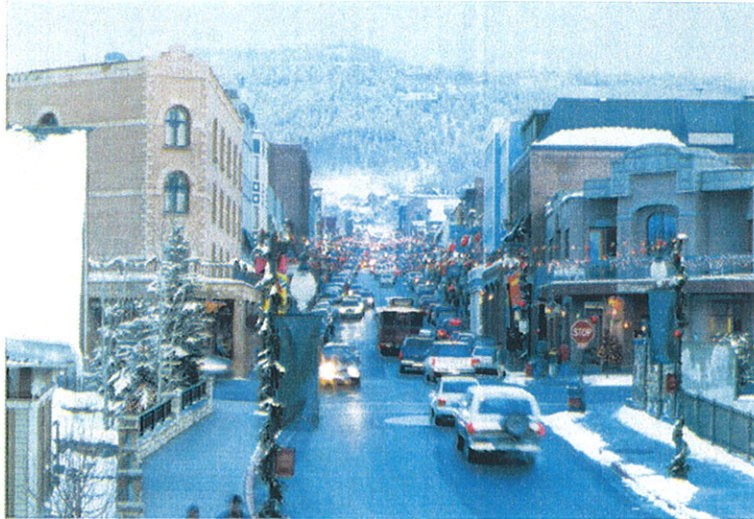
**Solitude**

Solitude may be the most aptly named resort in North America. Nestled atop Big Cottonwood Canyon and a scant 35 minutes from the Salt Lake City International Airport, Solitude feels a world away. While the crowds fight their way up Little Cottonwood Canyon to Alta and Snowbird or slog around the mountain to Park City, those who are in on skiing's best kept secret are at Solitude. Salt Lake locals know that long after the powder's tracked out elsewhere, Solitude still has the goods... even 3, 4, or even 5 days after a big storm). A Tyrolean-themed base village offers ample lodging and dining options, but limited fun for those looking to cut loose. Après-ski is tame and nightlife is non-existent. But with 500" of powder each year and two new quad chairlifts to help you access all of Solitude's legendary fluff, you might be too tired to party anyway.

### Brighton

Known as one of the snowboarding capital of the USA, Brighton is to boarders what Alta is to skiers – heaven. Sharing a boundary with neighboring Solitude, Brighton is the more unassuming of the two Big Cottonwood Canyon resorts. Slopeside lodging options are extremely limited and far from posh.

### Park City Resorts



### Park City

Utah's foremost ski town, **Park City** is a fun-loving town with a big, high-energy resort towering above it. The resort is generally considered an inexpensive place to stay, and represents good value for money. From the town you can access the main skiing and boarding area via two high-speed six-passenger lifts, which whisk you to the top in less than 12 minutes. There are 3,300 acres (1,335 ha) of skiable terrain, including eight bowls, and skiers of all abilities will be able to find something for them anywhere on the mountain. Main Street, with restaurants, bars, boutiques, and art galleries, is a great spot for après-ski or lunch on a day off. A new town bridge spanning Park Avenue means that skiers and snowboarders can now ski or ride directly from the mountain to Main Street. For dinner and après-ski, over 100 diverse restaurants and bars await.

### Deer Valley

**Deer Valley** has a deserved reputation for outstanding customer service. Everything at Deer Valley is first rate, from the lifts to the grooming. Of course it all comes with a first class price tag, but for those who are truly looking for a world-class destination resort, Deer Valley is the crème de la crème. Families love Deer Valley. The runs are groomed to perfection, the lodges are immaculate, the snow is dry and the crowds nonexistent. Ski valets will carry your equipment and you'll never touch your bags. If your aching from skiing all those moguls, just soak in the hot tub at one of the many five-star hotels scattered across the resort. Despite its stereotype as a playground for the rich and famous, Deer Valley has some outstanding terrain and though not much of it will raise the hair on the back of your neck, there's more than enough steep stuff to keep the kids occupied while mom enjoys her day at the spa and dad prowls the groomers.

### The Canyons

In a word, **The Canyons** is "big" – big enough to fit Aspen Snowmass and Aspen Mountain within its boundaries. The resort has one feature which differentiates it from its neighbors. Unlike many other Utah resorts, there is essentially no open bowl skiing at the Canyons – all the skiing is below the treeline. Almost all the runs are tree-lined and many of them have more twists and turns than is common for a Rockies ski resort. All of this has led many a visiting East Coast skier to opine that the Canyons is more like a big New England ski area, just with better snow. We find the comparison to be an apt one. If you're considering skiing at the Canyons, the small slopeside village which provides easy access to the mountain is popular. Staying in downtown Park City is also convenient because of the free shuttle service. Also consider renting one of the numerous ski houses and condos in the Park City region. There are some exceptional deals, particularly if you're traveling with a large group and willing to look around.

### Other Utah Ski Resorts ...



**Powder Mountain**

As its name suggests, Powder mountain is famous for its snow. With over 500" of snow a winter, Powder Mountain is a great choice for intermediate powderhounds looking for an uncrowded and reasonably-priced alternative.

**Snowbasin**

Many of our readers tell us that Snowbasin is the best resort they've never visited. Located near Ogden, not far from Salt Lake, Snowbasin is owned by the same company that owns Sun Valley (notice the similar smiling sun logo). Home of the 2002 Winter Olympic Downhill, Super G and Combined runs, Snowbasin has the terrain to be a first class winter resort, but most people forego Snowbasin for its nearby neighbors due to a total lack of slopeside lodging. No slopeside hotels, however, means no liftlines and those who make the trip to Snowbasin love it.

**Sundance**

**Sundance** resort was the brainchild of actor Robert Redford. Redford imagined a place where skiing was a more ethereal experience and the resort blended harmoniously into the natural surroundings. In that regard, the resort is a reaction against the excesses commonplace at many of today's mega-resorts. There are no gaudy townhouses or out-of-place condo developments. The resort emphasizes conservation and green business practices. But make no mistake; Sundance is still a five star resort. The resort hosts the renowned Sundance film festival each spring. The skiing, much like the resort itself, is modest. With only three chairlifts and 450 acres of terrain, Sundance is a rather small resort, but those who frequent it say it's big on character and one of America's most charming ski resorts.

